MoDOT – Railroad Overview

The MoDOT Multimodal Division, Rail Section administers the state's railroad program to ensure Missouri's rail system is safe for the motoring public, rail passengers and railroad employees. Within the office there are regulatory and program functions, including freight rail regulations; Amtrak passenger rail operations and promotion; light rail safety regulation; highway-rail crossing safety; rail/highway construction projects; highway-railroad crossing safety outreach; and safety inspections of railroad tracks, grade crossing signals, operating practices, and motive power and equipment.

Freight – Rail

Missouri is home to an extensive rail system. Missouri has the 11th largest number of railroad miles in the United States with approximately 5,300 miles of track and about 6,500 public and private highway-rail crossings. Twenty-two freight railroads operate in the state, carrying 43% of freight in Missouri. Kansas City and St. Louis are ranked as the second and sixth largest rail transportation centers in the nation, respectively. Overall, Missouri is 5th in freight rail employment.

Passenger

Amtrak provides intercity passenger rail service in Missouri along four routes:

- The Southwest Chief national route from Chicago to Los Angeles, with Missouri stops in LaPlata and Kansas City.
- The Texas Eagle national route from Chicago to San Antonio, with Missouri stops in St. Louis, Arcadia Valley, and Poplar Bluff.
- The Missouri River Runner is a state supported route from St. Louis to Kansas City, with stops in Kirkwood, Washington, Hermann, Jefferson City, Sedalia, Warrensburg, Lee's Summit, and Independence.
- The Lincoln Service, provided by Illinois, provides service between St. Louis and Chicago.

Safety

Missouri has over 3,300 at-grade highway-rail crossings. Ensuring safety on Missouri's vast railroad system is a primary function of the Rail Section. Rail staff administers a highway-rail grade crossing safety improvement program; employs rail safety inspectors to oversee railroads' compliance with state and federal safety regulations; oversees light rail safety regulation; and conducts railroad safety education and outreach.

Highway-Rail Crossing Safety Program

Missouri's Highway-Railroad Crossing Safety Program aims to improve highway-rail grade crossings throughout the state. The program is funded by a combination of federal and state funds. The FHWA Section 130 Program is a federal aid program administered through the state by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The state Grade Crossing Safety Account (GCSA) is funded by a 25 cent assessment on all Missouri motor vehicle registrations or renewals authorized by Section 389.612, RSMo. Annually, Missouri receives approximately $6 million in Section 130 funds and another $1.5 million per year through the state's GCSA. In FY 2025, MoDOT received an additional $25 million in general revenue funds. These funds can only be spent on improvements at public crossings for safety devices like flashing lights, gates, or warning bells; pavement markings; or the closure of a crossing. Each year, every public crossing is reviewed considering factors like train and vehicle traffic counts, train and vehicle speed, sight distance and accident history to select crossings for improvements.

Inspection Program

Seven railroad safety inspectors are responsible for ascertaining compliance with state and federal railroad laws, regulations, rules and standards in the disciplines of Track (2 inspectors), Operating Practices (2 inspectors) and Grade Crossing Signals (2 inspectors), and Motive Power and Equipment (1 inspector). An inspector reports findings and seeks

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correction of unsafe conditions following a routine inspection or the investigation of public complaints or railroad incidents such as derailments, collisions and public highway-rail crossing fatalities. An inspector has authority to enforce safe working conditions for railroad employees. Inspectors also govern clearances in the vicinity of railroad tracks and along railroad rights of way and can help grant variances if deemed reasonable and safe.

State Safety Oversight Program (SSO)
MoDOT's Rail Section provides financially and legally independent safety and regulatory oversight of Missouri's rail fixed guideway public transit systems – MetroLink (Bi-State Development/St. Louis), KC Streetcar (City of Kansas City) and the Loop Trolley (LTTDD/University City, MO). Funded through the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5329 to ensure that all public transportation systems that receive federal funds have a safety improvement and oversight program, this obligation is delegated to the states, and the SSO program is funded jointly with a 20% match from the State Transportation Fund. This safety program includes public transportation agency safety plan that is updated and reviewed annually, a public transportation safety certification training program for both rail transit agency and state safety oversight program staff. Each rail transit agency is subject to a triennial safety and compliance review by SSO, and MoDOT's SSO program is also audited triennially by the FTA – most recently in fall of 2024, where it was shown that we are delivering a program suitable for the needs of each rail transit system in Missouri through our most recent Program Standards.

Outreach
MoDOT's Rail Section staff provides presentations on Railroad Grade Crossing safety issues to community groups, schools, commercial drivers, driver education classes and other interested parties. This program is presented in conjunction with Missouri Operation Lifesaver, Inc., a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to saving lives and preventing incidents at crossings and on railroad property.

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